

Moria Milton Perez  
12 Chesterbrook Lane  
Andover, CT 06232  
Home Phone – (860) 498-1044  
Cell Phone – (860) 883-8600  
Email Address – [MoriaMontana@comcast.net](mailto:MoriaMontana@comcast.net)

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Dear members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee: Committee Co-Chairs: Senator Prague and Representative Ryan; Ranking Members: Senator Guglielmo and Representative Aman; and other members of the committee.

My name is Moria Perez. I am originally from a small rural town in Montana and grew up understanding the importance of community and how we all play an important role whether you are a citizen, a lawmaker, or a businessman. I have continued my community service as a career Firefighter/Paramedic for the town of Manchester and have served the citizens of Manchester in this capacity for seven years. I take my role of helping the members of our community in any crisis whether it is a medical emergency or a fire emergency very seriously. This is not just a job for me but a way of life.

I am also the wife of a career firefighter/paramedic and a mother of two wonderful sons. My husband and I have chosen career paths that give us an opportunity to make a difference in the community knowing full well that we may be injured or die while performing our duties. We hope to instill the importance of community and the job we perform in our children. This way of life has risks that many others will never have to face. Because of our unique occupational hazards, I am here

today to speak in favor of Raised Bill ~~6956~~, "An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage For Firefighters And Police Officers."

Currently, under Connecticut law, any firefighter hired prior to July 1996 who develops a heart condition while at work, the assumption is that the condition was caused by the performance of their duties and that presumption is not rebuttable. Career municipal firefighters and police officers hired after July 1, 1996 do not have this presumptive coverage. Career municipal firefighters and police officers hired after July 1, 1996 are the only group denied this coverage. Volunteer Firefighters, Volunteer Ambulance Members, State Police, University Security Forces, Capital Police, Correction Officers, any Hazardous Duty State Employees, Detectives and Inspectors in the Division of Criminal Justice and Motor Vehicle Inspectors are all covered under the current Connecticut Law, but not professional Firefighters.

Under the current law, my husband, other members of my Department, and all the volunteers from Manchester are all protected. I could be performing the same duties at a fire scene with all of these people, and if I suffered a cardiac event I would be the only one who would have to prove that my cardiac event was related to the job. What makes me less deserving of protection under Connecticut Law? As a member of the broad team of emergency response professionals, we face occupational hazards in the daily performance of our duties, all of which can have direct cardiac toxicity or lead to cardiovascular disease, but because I am a professional firefighter and was hired after July 1996, I have been singled out to be denied the protection that my co-workers receive from our state government.

Firefighting involves considerable physical exertion and vigorous exercise while performing our duties. It has been well documented that such physical exertion can trigger an acute myocardial infarction and sudden cardiac death. Carbon

monoxide (CO) is formed by the incomplete combustion of carbon containing materials. Firefighters are exposed to very high concentrations of CO at fires. Carbon monoxide also decreases the oxygen carrying ability of the blood and poses acute chronic health effects. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are a group of carbon compounds that are formed in most fires involving carbon-containing materials, including wood, fuels and many man-made materials. Like carbon monoxide, studies of long-term exposure to PAHs have shown an accelerated formation of atherosclerotic plaques. These are just some of the hazards that professional firefighters face every day.

I hope that the State of Connecticut values my contribution to my community in the role as a firefighter/paramedic equally to the contribution of the many other public servants that are currently protected. I do not warrant less protection just because I was hired after 1996. I hope, with your support of this bill, that I can perform my duties with the peace of mind that I will be able to provide for my husband and children in the event that I suffer a career ending injury related to heart and hypertension. I want to be able to tell my children that if they choose to follow the career paths of their parents and serve their community, that they will be treated equally to the many public servants that came before them and that their state legislature supports their critical contribution to their community.

I respectfully request that the members of this committee please support Raised Bill 6956 or any similar legislation that might come before you. I would also ask that your colleagues in the State Legislature, should this bill make it to the floor of the full Legislature, please support this legislation. If you or your colleagues have any questions, feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you for your time and consideration on this very important issue.